



Expanding the World of Quality Mentoring

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**The Value of Mentoring**

At its most basic level, mentoring helps because it guarantees a young person that there is someone who cares about them. A child is not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges.

Think back. Did you know how to study for a test or make plans for college? Do you remember wanting your first car or looking for a part-time job? Simple things that seem easy or straightforward to you now may appear to be a complete mystery to a young person.

Mentors provide their mentees with an experienced friend who is there to help in any number of situations.

**Support for education**

- Mentors help keep students in school.
- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class (Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters).
- Mentors help with homework and can improve their mentees' academic skills.

**Support with day-to-day living**

- Mentors help improve a young person's self-esteem.
- Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking (Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters).
- About 40% of a teenager's waking hours are spent without companionship or supervision. Mentors provide teens with a valuable place to spend free time.
- Mentors teach young people how to relate well to all kinds of people and help them strengthen communication skills.

**Support in the workplace**

- Mentors help young people set career goals and start taking steps to realize them.
- Mentors can use their personal contacts to help young people meet industry professionals, find internships and locate job possibilities.
- Mentors introduce young people to professional resources and organizations they may not know.
- Mentors can help their mentees learn how to seek and keep jobs.

The number of ways mentoring can help a youth are as varied as the people involved in each program. While the lists and statistics can be impressive, personal stories can be even more impressive. Take a look at [mentoring success stories](#) to see how mentoring works from different perspectives.

**Statistics and Research**

Research confirms what we know anecdotally or intuitively — that mentoring works.

The 2013 study "The Role of Risk: Mentoring Experiences and Outcomes for Youth with Varying Risk Profiles," examined mentoring program relationships, experiences and benefits for higher-risk youth, and among the findings determined:

- The strongest program benefit, and most consistent across risk groups, was a reduction in depressive symptoms — a particularly noteworthy finding given that almost one in four youth reported worrisome levels of these symptoms at baseline.
- Findings also suggested gains in social acceptance, academic attitudes and

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grades.

- In addition to benefits in specific domains, mentored youth also experienced gains in a greater number of outcomes than youth in the comparison group.

Overall, the study's results suggest that mentoring programs can be beneficial for youth with a broad range of backgrounds and characteristics. Tailoring the training and support that is available to matches based on the specific risks youth face has the potential to produce even stronger benefits.

A Public/Private Ventures project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and distributed by MDRC, the study involved more than 1,300 youth, drawn from seven programs serving young people in Washington State. Oversight and support for the project were provided by Washington State Mentors.

[View the Full Study](#)

[View the Executive Summary](#)

This report builds on existing research, including a research brief published by Child Trends and titled "Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development" found that youth who participate in mentoring relationships experience a number of positive benefits.

- In terms of educational achievement, mentored youth have better school attendance; a better chance of going on to higher education; and better attitudes toward school.
- In terms of health and safety, mentoring appears to help prevent substance abuse and reduce some negative youth behaviors.
- On the social and emotional development front, taking part in mentoring promotes positive social attitudes and relationships. Mentored youth tend to trust their parents more and communicate better with them.

### **Mentoring and Academic Achievement**

High school graduation is an economic imperative in today's global economy driven by knowledge and innovation. Mentoring is a positive youth development strategy that supports the Grad Nation goal of attaining a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020. Research has shown that mentoring has significant positive effects on two early indicators among high school drop-outs: high levels of absenteeism (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007) and recurring behavior problems (Thurlow, Sinclair & Johnson, 2002). A landmark Public/Private Ventures evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters programs showed that students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school. An analysis of mentoring program evaluations conducted by Jekielek, Moore and Hair found that youth in mentoring relationships present better attitudes and behaviors at school and are more likely to attend college than their counterparts.

Dropping out of school is not a singular event but rather the culmination of a long process of disengagement. It is critical that intervention efforts aimed at students with a disproportionate number of risk indicators for dropping out of high school reach students young enough. Children between 9 and 15 are commonly at important turning points in their lives. It is during this time that they may permanently turn off from serious engagement in school life and turn to a variety of risky behaviors that can limit their chances of reaching productive adulthood. Encouragingly, this is also the age bracket during which preventative intervention is most successful and youth are most capable of envisioning a positive future and plotting the steps they need to take to reach their goals. They are at the right stage of development to best absorb and benefit from the skills of a strong mentor (Rhodes and Lowe, 2008).

A recent highly-comprehensive study conducted by Communities In Schools and the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University identified a variety of predictive risk factors for dropping out. The report states that while there is no single risk factor that causes dropping out, each additional risk factor

an individual faces increases the likelihood of dropping out. Some of the key, alterable risk factors the study cites are:

- Teen parenthood;
- Substance abuse;
- Criminal behaviors;
- Lack of self-esteem;
- Poor school performance/Grade retention;
- Absenteeism;
- Discipline problems at school;
- Low educational expectations/Lack of plans for education beyond high school; and

- Lack of interaction with extracurricular activities.

There are also numerous external risk factors for dropping out, such as gender, socioeconomic status, level of parental education, involvement with child welfare services, living in a single parent home and having a parent in prison. Given that the more risk factors a student faces the more likely he/she is to drop out, we can extrapolate that interventions aimed at reducing and removing these alterable risk factors will be more successful at preventing students from dropping out.

Mentoring by a caring adult over a prolonged period of time has been shown in countless academic studies to be effective in combating these risk factors. A number of studies have revealed a correlation between a young person's involvement in a quality mentoring relationship and positive outcomes in the areas of school, mental health, problem behavior and health (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, 2002; Zimmerman, Bingenheimer & Behrendt, 2005).

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